

**TOPIC: RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF MASTER'S IN PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT STUDIES AT RED ROCKS COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**PREPARED BY: IAN MACGILLIVRAY, ASSISTANT DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

**I. SUMMARY**

This item recommends approval for Red Rocks Community College (RRCC) to offer a Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree.

**II. BACKGROUND**

**SENATE BILL 13-178**

Senate Bill 13-178, signed into law by Governor Hickenlooper on May 17, 2013, authorized Red Rocks Community College to offer a Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree. The bill amended §23-60-213, Colorado Revised Statute, to state, "Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, Red Rocks Community College is authorized to confer a graduate degree upon a student who completes the Physician Assistant Studies program and shall seek accreditation for the program."

**COMMISSION AUTHORITY**

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education's role and responsibility in the review of new academic programs at institutions operating under a performance contract is defined in §23-5-129, C.R.S., which states that:

(6) While operating pursuant to a performance contract negotiated pursuant to this section, the governing board of a state institution of higher education...

(b) Need not consult with nor obtain approval from the Colorado commission on higher education to create, modify, or eliminate academic and vocational programs offered by the institution, so long as such creations, modifications, and eliminations are consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. Institutions shall submit information to the department demonstrating that the creation or modification of an academic or career and technical education program is consistent with the institution's statutory role and mission. The Colorado commission on higher education shall have the authority to override the creation or modification of an academic or vocational program if the change made by the governing board is inconsistent with the institution's statutory role and mission.

## **OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROGRAM**

The following is summarized from the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education's August 14, 2013 agenda:

[This] is a 25 month program with the goal to prepare students for the national physician assistant certifying exam. Current admission requirements include an undergraduate degree and 2000 hours of paid medical experience.

In order to continue, the program must meet new accreditation standards established by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant, Inc., the national accrediting organization for all physician assistant programs in the United States. Eligibility of the Accreditation Standards for Physician Assistant programs require that all currently accredited PA programs confer graduate degrees to those students who enroll in a program after 2020. A single institution must be clearly identified as the sponsor of the program, must be authorized under applicable law to provide a program of post-secondary education, must be accredited by a recognized regional accrediting agency, and must be authorized by the accrediting agency to confer upon graduates of the PA program a graduate degree.

The program has an affiliation agreement with St. Francis University (Loretto, PA) for the provision of the masters curriculum content and the conferring of a masters of medical science degree on its graduates. As a result of the ongoing relationship, the graduate program curriculum is established and has received previous approval from all accrediting agencies.

## **COLORADO GENERAL ASSEMBLY SUPPORT**

The Colorado General Assembly authorized Red Rocks Community College to offer the Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree in Senate Bill 13-178, which was signed into law by Governor Hickenlooper on May 17, 2013.

## **III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

The Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree at Red Rocks Community College (RRCC) was approved by the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education at its August 14, 2013 meeting. The next step is Commission approval.

## **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Commission approve Red Rocks Community College's proposal to offer a Master of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) degree.**

**V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs Division and are available upon request.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

§23-5-129, C.R.S. Governing boards - performance contract - authorization - operations